

Election Timing in Colorado Springs

Four local organizations have sued the City over its election timing. The lawsuit alleges that holding elections for Mayor and City Council in April disproportionately impacts non-white voters.

Why challenge the election timing in Colorado Springs?

Low Turnout

- Voter turnout plummets in off-cycle elections. The voter turnout for the 2021 municipal election was only 26.87%

Unequal Turnout

- Non-white registered voters are only half as likely as white registered voters to vote in the April elections
- This turnout gap closes dramatically for November elections

Waste of Taxpayer Resources

- The city spends additional time, effort, and money to hold municipal elections separate from national elections.

Non-Responsive Government

- With skewed voter turnout in April elections, the City Council is less responsive to the needs of minority communities.

Underrepresentation

- Holding elections in April leads to a government that is less representative of the community
- Over the last decade, over 90% of the successful candidates for City Council and Mayor were white.
- No Hispanic or Black resident has ever won an at-large City

What is Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act?

Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 prohibits election practices that disparately impact minority communities, *regardless of intent*. The law applies to practices that have a discriminatory *effect*. It does not require a showing of discriminatory intent, and the groups suing the City aren't alleging intent.

Frequently Asked Questions

Will holding the local elections at the same time as national elections cause ballot fatigue?

- While there is some evidence of voter drop-off from long ballots, the effect of April elections is worse. The proportion of voters who do not fill out races at the bottom of the ballot is much lower than the proportion that do not vote in April.

Will changing the election timing increase voter turnout?

- Yes. Studies indicate that moving to on-cycle elections doubles voter turnout on average.
- Other cities that have changed from off-cycle to on-cycle local elections had an immediate increase in voter turnout.

Is this partisan?

- No, it is about good government. Municipalities throughout the country have moved to November elections. Recently, both the Republican-majority Arizona legislature and the Democratic-majority California legislature have required cities to move to November elections.



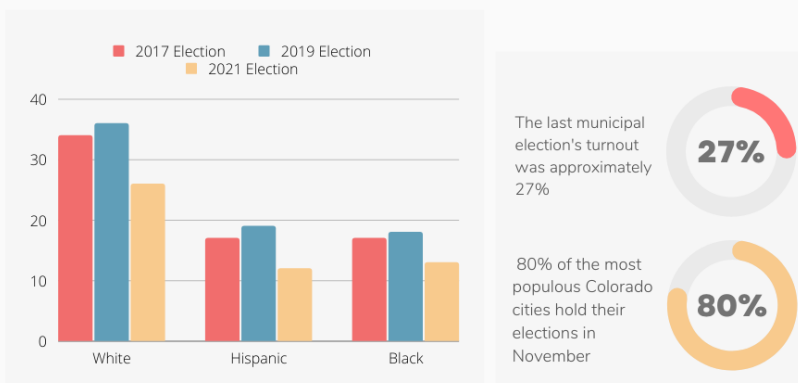
Does holding local elections in November take attention away from local issues?

- No. Studies indicate that there is **more** attention paid to local elections when they are in November. People pay more attention to all levels of government around November because it is “election season,” so local issues get more coverage.

Do off-cycle municipal elections increase government responsiveness?

- No. The low voter turnout and disparate impact of the elections make government officials less accountable to the people they represent.
- Off-cycle local elections allow narrow special interests to influence elections.

COLORADO SPRINGS VOTER TURNOUT



Not only do April elections lower voter turnout in the City, but they do so unequally. There is a massive racial disparity in voter turnout in Colorado Springs. In the previous three general November elections, white voters consistently vote at disproportionately higher rates than non-white voters.

